3: Fulop--53 E-5 (1953) 1954 SQ19 Tucano SQ19

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Typical maloca (house) of the Tukano linguistic group. (Photos by M. Fulop.)

/12 cont./ The vegetation, therefore, is the high and dense forest of the "hydro-hygro-megathermic type," similar to that of the Rio Negro. The palm trees merit special attention. There are many varieties, sometimes following the course of the water and at other times dispersed through the woodland, which the forest dwellers use for various purposes.

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We noted among the palms of "terra-firme" the tucum (astrocárium /Astrocaryum/ vulgare, Mart. or astr. tucumóides), the bacaba (oenocárpus bacaba, Mart.), the açaí /assai/ (eutérpe olerácea, Mart.), the inajá (Maximiliána régia, Mart.), the pupunha (Guilerma /Guilielma/ speciosa), the paxiúba (iriartea exorrhiza or setígera, Mart.). Among those of the inundated places, the javarí (astrocárium javarí), the miritĺ or buritĺ (maurítia vinifera and m. flexuosa), the caraná (maurítia caraná), the jará (leopoldinia maior), the piaçaba (leopoldinia piassába, Wal.), the tucumã (astrocarium tucuman, Mart.). The climbing palm, the jacitára or Kamwarri, of the genus Desmoncus, is of great use in the indigenous basketry.

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In general there is only a small superficial humous layer, from which emerges the imposing millenary forest, and after that the sandy or clayey strata. A primary consequence of such a small humous base is that the trees have very superficial roots, and therefore the storms frequently knock them down, producing true clearings in the forests. A second consequence is that the land becomes unproductive after three or four years of the primitive native agriculture.

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/13/ The rivers and igarapés are populated by many species of fish, which constitute one of the principal foods of the native.

The Amazonian fauna is not rich in varieties, and less so quantitatively. Besides the dangerous felines, the onça /jaguar/ (felix /Felis/ onça) and the gato macarajá /ocelot/ (felix pardalis and felix mucura, Neuw.), there are few animals that the native ordinarily can find and that offer him meat for food: the veado /deer/ (gen. cervus), the paca (coelógenys paca), the cotia /agouti/ (dasyprocta aguti, Lin.), queixada and caetitu /species of peccary/ (dicotyles labiátus, tayassú albirostris, and tayassú tayassú, Lin.), the anta /tapir/ (tapírus americánus,

5: Goldman E-5 (1939-1940) 1963
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121 societies. In reconstructing tropical forest culture history, note must be taken of the extraordinary ease of cultural transfers over the entire area. For this reason alone knowledge of total cultural systems seems essential. As matters stand now, much reconstruction must be based upon the very unreliable foundation of trait comparisons. What has [177] been of special interest in my study of the Cubeo has been the way in which some widespread cultural traits, particularly masked dances, harvest rites, and sacred trumpets, have been taken up and fitted into distinctive cultural patterns with a focus in an ancestral cult.

133 The Northwest Amazon region is bounded on the south by the Amazon, from where it is joined by the Rio Negro eastward to where the Marañón issues from the Andes. The Guaviare River is its northern boundary, the Andean cordillera bounds it in the west, and the Rio Negro in the east. The principal rivers of the region are the Caquetá, Apaporis, Tiquié, Papurý, Isana, Vaupés (known in Brazil as the Caiarý), Cuduiarí, Querarí, Aiarí, Tié, and Guainía. All drain into the Amazon. Ecologically, the Northwest Amazon is sharply differentiated only from the neighboring Andean region to the west and to a lesser degree from the open prairie or llanos on its northern • [137] side. Eastward it fades into the flatter and lower-lying forests of the Amazon. Its southern margin is fixed only by an arbitrary river boundary. It is a densely wooded region of tall trees closely packed and interlaced with vines and lianas. At the river edges the forest growth is lower and more brushlike. It is also an elevated region whose streams are punctuated by hazardous cataracts. On the Vaupés, between Yurupari and the Rio Negro, Dr. Hamilton Rice (1910) counted 30 major cataracts and 60 small ones. The cataracts (*cachoeiras*) are for the Indians focal points of residence. Traditional sites, they often mark tribal and sib boundaries. Every cataract has its petroglyphs that depict mythical figures still known to the Indians. In some areas, as I have observed, the residents of the *cachoeiras* freshen the petroglyphs from time to time with deepening incisions. The rapids are more of a navigational hazard to the European traveler than to the Indians, who are expert canoemen and whose light craft [502] is easily portaged. Dr. Rice, who knew a good deal about the Amazon, declared the Cubeo to be the most expert canoemen on the river. [501] I can also testify to their coolness and skill in navigating their small dugout canoes, that have only an inch or two of freeboard, through the twisting boulder-strewn channel of a thundering rapids.

The land slopes abruptly eastward. In its western part the area is often a tumble of ravine-cut hills, exposed rock, and swamp. The Vaupés flows past high, open, uninhabited mesas. Scattered hills of

[text continues on p. 10]

6: Moser and Tayler E,N-5 (1960-1961) 1967 SQ19 Tucano SQ19

originally worked wild rubber for one of the great rubber barons and they had earned their clothing in exchange for their labours. Their torn trousers were only a veneer of the civilized world, for here they seemed to come into their own element: they talked to each other in Tukano; they became alert to the forest they knew so well.

We were living in a closed world of limited horizons, on either side the thick forest, ahead the river and above a ribbon of sky. Giant emerald kingfishers with orange heads and long black beaks darted out in front of us. Myriads of white butterflies rose off the sandbanks, settling on our bodies to enjoy the salty sweat. On occasions we saw a delicate wader like a sandpiper bob up and down on the sand near the water's edge. The water had now changed colour, no longer black but a deep wine red, as it flowed over the pale sandy bed. We supposed this colour was due to the high iron content in the rock.

Our first major halt was made at Pedro's house. He had established himself as a tradesman between the Indians on the upper Piraparaná and the civilized rubber gatherers of Mitú. He bought *farinha* from the Tukano in exchange for fish-hooks, salt and cloth. His magnificent thatched house was a foretaste of what we were to see. But the occupants with their dishevelled clothes, the sheets of crude rubber hanging from the beams and the iron cooking pots, seemed a strange paradox.

We unloaded all our equipment, sending Candilo and his assistant back to Mitú with *Vencedor* and the larger outboard motor. With him went one of our valuable cameras whose shutter had jammed during the first day, and a note to Nestor in Bogotá, warning him of the difficulties he would encounter and advising him again to travel as light as possible. Of the now depleted party, José and Uriel were to be our guides throughout the journey; Matias would ensure that we reached the first Indian habitation on the Piraparaná; while Bernavez went on ahead in his dugout canoe carrying two drums of our fuel. We were joined by one more man, old Miguez, who brought his own small Indian canoe. From now on we would have to make double journeys with *El Diablo* until we reached Indians who would carry our loads in their own canoes.

Next morning, while Donald and Horacio repacked much of the kit, Brian and José went ahead with a small load in *El Diablo*. The Ti narrowed and then divided; here our route towards the Piraparaná portage lay up a tiny tributary, the Caño Berada or Fish Bow Creek, as it was known to the Indians. With our arrival in the Berada, a mere stream flowing out of the undergrowth, our whole mode of travel changed. We could no longer use the motor; instead we had to push the boat upstream. We spent the rest of the day waist-deep in water, clambering over submerged timbers and occasional rocks; an Indian out in front cut a way through the fallen trees.

Christmas Day saw us cross two rock ledges where the boat had to be com-

6: Moser and Tayler E, N-5 (1960-1961) 1967 SQ19 Tucano SQ19

pletely unloaded and then dragged over. That evening was a beautiful one and we made camp at an old *mitasava*, the Indian traveller's staging point, where he erects a small palm-thatch shelter. We must have been on higher ground, for it was dry and sandy while the forest had changed to small birch-like trees, with lichen and moss underfoot. Somehow this was an appropriate place to eat our wild Christmas turkey which Miguez had shot earlier in the day and drink each other's health from the precious bottle of 'medicinal' whisky.

The next day our watery struggle continued and progress became even slower. Only half the equipment reached our camp site, this time back in low-lying forest. That evening Donald and José went ahead to the next stream junction to return at dark with the news that there was barely any water at all in the stream, and that we would be pushing the boat over dried-out sandbanks. Matias, our hardest worker, departed across country to the Piraparaná. He left at dusk, his coca pouch slung across his back to ward off the pangs of hunger. He promised to return in three days with men from the first habitation on the river; he was true to his word but it took him more than three days.

That night there was a disquieting atmosphere in the camp. Horacio was even more unhappy than usual about our excessive amount of equipment. Our three remaining Indians, José, Uriel and Miguez, kept to themselves, talking through half the night. We awoke to find Miguez vanished, never to be seen again, and José and Uriel packing their own belongings on to their backs. They said they were going to join Matias and bring back more men – we knew they were about to desert us.

We made them put down their gear and then listened to their tale of woe. We were not feeding them well enough; they wanted more than just *farinha*, they needed rice as well. They were being made to carry too much, and the stream beds were so dry that it would be impossible for us to get through until the rains arrived. So we compromised, we agreed to leave behind some of the fuel if necessary and to give them the same food as ourselves; we repeated our promise to pay all the Indians who worked for us in cloth and trade goods – or even money if it was of any use to them.

During the day we pushed the boat, first down to the previous site and then, fully loaded, back towards our present camp. Once Horacio lost his way when taking a short cut; he was not well and we thought it was due to a recurrence of malaria. That night he became worse, and with him unfit we decided to go ahead on a reconnaissance with José, leaving him to guard the equipment and recover, while we tried to reach the other side of the portage; if necessary we would go overland to find the first house.

Early next morning we packed our rucksacks and left with a week's supplies. Walking over high ground with willows, lichen and moss, to our great joy we reached the western entrance to the portage after only two hours. We walked through the low scrub for half an hour, along the path